

GEORGE E. BROWN, JR. UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE

SPEECH OF

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 17, 2000

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to add a few words to those of my colleagues in support of this bill to designate the U.S. Courthouse on 12th Street in Riverside, California, as the "George E. Brown, Jr., United States Courthouse." I think this is a worthy honor for a man who brought so much to his constituents in California, to colleagues in Congress, and to the citizens of this country.

The death of George Brown, Jr. last year deprived this Congress and this country of a great champion of science and technology. While I worked with him for only a brief time, I felt as though I had known him for years because he had been a colleague and friend of my father and because his reputation was so well known.

George Brown was a man of courage and vision and ideological consistency. In his 34 years of distinguished service in the House, he worked to advance energy and resource conservation, sustainable agriculture, advanced technology development, space exploration, international scientific cooperation, and the integration of technology in education.

With or without a Courthouse in his name, George Brown will be remembered. But I'm sure if he were with us here today, George would appreciate this gesture on the part of his colleagues and the country to ensure his legacy lasts beyond our own lifetimes.

HONORING ABDUL CONTEH

HON. TONY P. HALL

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 18, 2000

Mr. HALL of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, on Sunday Major League Soccer honored Abdul Conteh, a star of the San Jose Earthquakes, by presenting the inaugural New York Life Humanitarian of the Year Award to him.

I want to add my voice to those honoring Mr. Conteh, and I want to commend Major League Soccer and New York Life for drawing attention to the world's humanitarian crises and to those working to do something to ease suffering.

Abdul Conteh was born in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone. His family moved to the United States when he was a teenager, but he has not forgotten his people and his country and he is using his hard-won fame to champion their needs. In conjunction with the Santa Clara Valley chapter of the American Red Cross, Mr. Conteh recently launched an initiative to raise funds to alleviate the suffering of a people who have experienced gruesome atrocities, death, and destruction during nine years of war.

His hope is to fund a school and other projects that can help his people reclaim their

lives. As he works toward this goal he is doing something else too: he is raising the awareness of soccer fans and others who otherwise wouldn't think about Sierra Leone—Americans who can do something to help the people of a nation founded by former slaves, people who have been trapped by fighting over the lucrative diamond trade for nine long years.

Rebel forces—funded by stealing Sierra Leone's diamonds and assisted by Liberia's president, Charles Taylor—have brutalized innocent men, women and children throughout Sierra Leone. They have driven hundreds of thousands from their homes and killed tens of thousands more. Some 20,000 of these suffered forced amputations of their hands, ears, or legs by machete; most of these victims died. Untold numbers of girls and women have been raped, many of them left infected with AIDS as a result. The country, which should be one of the richest in Africa, consistently ranks as the poorest in the world and the most miserable by every measure.

I have been to Sierra Leone and I have seen first-hand the results of these rebels. Last December, Congressman FRANK WOLF and I visited camps for the survivors of the rebels' attacks. We met thousands of people who are lucky to be alive, who did not bleed to death as they struggled to flee the rebels who had just cut off their arms, legs, or ears. Few were spared rebels' grotesque and evil acts. Infants' arms and legs were cut off. Young men in the prime of their life suddenly had half of a leg, or no hands. Women were raped by rebels and then had their arms amputated—only to give birth several months later as a result of the rape they suffered.

Mr. Conteh knows first-hand what I have just described; more than 20 of his family members have been killed in the bloodshed. The horrible images we all have seen and the stories we have heard about the atrocities in Sierra Leone touch Mr. Conteh and others personally. It is the survivors who are left with the empty beds, the missing generations, and the questions from the children as to why their friends, uncles, cousins, siblings, or parents are no longer here.

Through his initiative, Mr. Conteh will make a difference in people's lives in Sierra Leone. I commend Mr. Conteh for his efforts on behalf of the people of Sierra Leone, I congratulate him for receiving this prestigious humanitarian award, and I wish him and others doing lifesaving work in Sierra Leone all the best.

BLASTING STERLING PRIVATE
FEE-FOR-SERVICE M+C PLAN
FOR RISK AVOIDANCE

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 18, 2000

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, I am outraged that the Sterling Life Insurance Company, which operates the only approved private fee-for-service Medicare+Choice (M+C) plan, has established a benefit package for 2001 that is designed to enroll healthier patients and avoid sicker patients. For 2001, Sterling will require 50 percent copayments for home health services and durable medical equipment.

What Sterling is doing is an unconscionable rip-off of sicker beneficiaries and the Medicare program itself. Home health and DME are services that are associated with sicker patients, who are also more costly, so Sterling is deliberately avoiding sicker, more costly patients.

Under the Medicare law, M+C plans must provide all standard Medicare benefits, but are permitted to modify the cost sharing amounts for those services as long as the total actuarial value of the cost sharing does not exceed the total actuarial amount of the cost sharing in the traditional Medicare program. The Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) must approve the actuarial value of the cost sharing, but has no authority under the statute to prevent M+C plans from tailoring their cost sharing amounts as they choose.

I will introduce legislation to require HCFA to approve all cost sharing amounts of M+C plans and prohibit M+C plans from manipulating cost sharing amounts to avoid sicker patients. Sterling is saying that they are trying to avoid fraud, but clearly, they are deliberately seeking to enroll only healthier, more profitable patients, while avoiding sicker, more costly patients. Since the Republicans have slowed the implementation of risk-adjustment of payments to M+C plans, Sterling will be overpaid for the patients that it enrolls. This practice is an obscene rip off of Medicare and the taxpayers, and I will try to stop it. When the new Congress convenes in January, I will introduce legislation to give HCFA authority to approve all cost sharing amounts to prevent such blatant risk avoidance.

REGARDING H.R. 4838

HON. LORETTA SANCHEZ

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 18, 2000

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to commend the House of Representatives for the successful passage of H.R. 4838, which waives the oath of allegiance requirement for people with disabilities that seek citizenship in our great nation.

The need for such a bill is best exemplified in the case of Vijai Rajan of Anaheim, California. Twenty-five-year-old Vijai was born in India and has been residing in the U.S. since she was four months old. Ms. Rajan has several disabilities including cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, and Crohn's disease which prevents her from raising her hand or memorizing and understanding the oath. Doctors say her comprehension is that of a baby or toddler.

This piece of legislation is significant in expressing our nation's view of acceptance and welcoming of new citizens. These people cannot be denied citizenship when they have played by all the rules and have waited for so long.

Her parents' four year battle with the INS is nearly over and Vijai as well as the other 1,100 disabilities waiver applicants are closer to becoming citizens of the United States. I am certain that these family members enjoy peace of mind and inner satisfaction knowing that their loved ones are part of America.